



APPLEBY ARCHAEOLOGY



At the December meeting of the Appleby Archaeology Group Ian Whyte, Professor of Historical Geography at Lancaster University, spoke on Parliamentary Enclosures and the Landscape of the Upper Eden and Lune Valley. He talked about the landscape before and after the enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries and cited many local examples.

There is evidence of some forms of enclosures before the 18th century such as strip field boundaries, open fields surrounded by small enclosures with solid walls and enclosures of demesne land such as the 1560s boundary to the deer park at Ravenstonedale. There was continuous encroachment onto common land and there are records of fines being made in the 16th and 17th centuries as plots were taken from the commons.

There was therefore nothing new in enclosing land but from the 1760s this could be done by Act of Parliament. Private arrangements continued to be made usually for the enclosure of open fields for arable use. In 1753, 130 acres at Low Close at Moorland were enclosed and in 1769, 527 acres at Crackenthorpe. One of the witnesses to the Crackenthorpe arrangement became a commissioner for the parliamentary enclosure of Brampton in 1772.

Enclosure stemmed from a need to improve productivity. Commons were being over used and this came to a head in the North when the number of cattle being driven south from Scotland increased from 30,000 to 50-80,000 after the Union. Other abuses contributed, such as the indiscriminate cutting of turf and peat. If the land was enclosed the individual allotment could be used as the farmer wanted and animals could be bred selectively. Other uses include tree planting at Kendal, setting aside land for grouse, and selling to developers as in Windermere.

Parliamentary enclosure was an expensive undertaking and involved several stages before the Enclosure Award. There are many sources of information on the process such as accounts, correspondence, sale of allotments and estate papers

Enclosure of land took place later in the North than in the Midlands and the South. Of all the land enclosed 21% occurred between 1770-80, 25% in the early 19th century due to the need for grain during and after the Napoleonic Wars and 20% in the 1850s. Local examples include; from 1770-1779 good low lying land was enclosed at Appleby, Brampton and Sandford, in the 1790s uphill land at Shap and by 1821 higher land on the limestone escarpment behind Dufton.

Enclosure was not always successful due to opposition and expense. Two attempts were made at Ravenstonedale, one unsuccessful the other never carried out. At Yanwith in 1812 it was decided that to enclose the Common would be far too expensive and anti enclosure pamphlets were printed. In the South enclosure was sometimes seen as oppression and social engineering wiping out the English peasant. There is no evidence that this was the case in the North West where enclosure was often initiated by the tenants and seen to be in the interest of all.

The effects on the landscape are clearly seen with the straight walls, boundaries and roads giving a very rational and ridged look. Each enclosure had a stone quarry providing stone for the walls and some were used intensively and then allowed to return to nature. Field lime kilns are seen and in the pre-railway age coal was brought by pack horse. Enclosures were divided into allotments and their boundaries were usually of stone but sometimes hedges or iron posts and wire were used.. Around Appleby hedges were of hawthorn which is rapid growing and was cheap. Hedges tend to be on the low ground and stone walls higher up. The walls constructed at the time of the enclosures were of a specified height often 6 foot with cap stones and at least one line of protruding through stones. Roads were converted from muddy tracks and the early ones could be up to 60 feet in width: there is an example at Skelton. The wide verge would provide alternative paths if the road was very muddy. Orton manorial records forbid squatting or grazing on the verges. Later Macadam's technique was adopted and the width was reduced to 30 feet. Sometimes out buildings were constructed such as fields barns and where there were large allotments new farm houses might also be built. Today many of these buildings have been abandoned and left to ruin. These features can be seen at Inglewood, one of the largest enclosures of 29,000 acres in 1819, at Orton, on Stainmore and at Asby Scar. Not every community was enclosed and driving across Orton Scar the enclosures of Orton are apparent because of the green improved pasture as opposed to the heather moor land of Crosby Ravensworth.

By the late 18th century the tide turned against enclosures and in London a movement for preservation of commons for recreation was growing. The Enclosure of Commons Act 1876 prevented any further encroachment on Common Land by landowners.

Professor Whyte ended his talk by asking if there was a case for preserving the two hundred year old landscape as much of it is now deteriorating. He answered several questions from the floor before being enthusiastically thanked for his informative talk.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday January 14th, at 7.30pm in the Supper Room, Market Hall, Appleby when Patricia Crompton, a group member, will speak on Environmental Archaeology on Shetland. Non members are most welcome. The AGM will be held before this meeting

Phyllis Rouston 19/12/02